



## AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

11<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022



## AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall,  
Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 11 June 2022 commencing at 11 a.m.**

### AGENDA

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\* Denotes attachments

**N Juby  
Chairman**

25/05/22

## AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



**Minutes of a Meeting of Council**  
**held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton**  
**on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022 commencing at 11:00am.**

**PRESENT:**

**Chairman:** N. Juby.

**Councillors:** D. du Preez, G. Dickey, M. Barker, C. Sherrard, P. Shaw, B. Barnes (by Zoom),  
G. Ralph (by Zoom).

**Staff:** B. Wilson.

**1. APOLOGIES:**

T. Clark, D. Cocks, G. Annan, D. Klee, A. Daniel, J. Dyer.

It was moved;

**that apologies be accepted.**

**du Preez/Dickey – CARRIED**

**2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:**

None declared.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 26<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022:**

Councillor Barnes recommended that “Apologies” should be included in the minutes for the Public Excluded Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March.

Councillor Ralph suggested adding a paragraph at the end of the February minutes stating that Council subsequently went on a field trip to Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino Weir.

It was moved;

**that the minutes of the previous meetings of 26<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 as amended be accepted as true and correct records.**

**Sherrard/Barker – CARRIED**

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:**

Nil.

5. **COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:**

Nil

6. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:**

Several Councillors commented that it had been a good breeding season and there appeared to be a lot of birds around. But Councillor Sherrard suggested that perhaps ducks were congregating in the comparatively few wetlands that still held water.

Councillor Ralph advised that there would be a huge increase in maize costs later in the year, but he was likely to have a surplus and could provide maize for the banding programme. The Chairman expressed his appreciation to Councillor Ralph for this offer.

Councillor Barnes reported that he had observed a car parked in front of the gate at the Stone Jug Road property and recommended that a sign be placed on the gate to warn people from parking there. Mr Wilson replied that signs had recently been purchased for this purpose.

Councillor Ralph highlighted the 400 new entries to the banding database, noting that these were captive-reared mallards, and thus the return rate for such releases had improved significantly.

Mr Wilson updated Councillors on the Waikato District Plan, advising that Council had joined the following appeals to the Environment Court.

- **Ward Demolition:** Oppose. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to disallow the rezoning of 2 sites at Meremere, comprising approximately 56 hectares, from Rural Zone to Heavy Industrial Zone.
- **Middlemiss Farms:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to remove conservation lot provisions for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of Significant Natural Areas, especially wetlands.
- **Department of Conservation:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse WDC decisions on conservation lots, biodiversity offsetting, and Significant Natural Areas.
- **Federated Farmers:** Support. The applicant is seeking to reverse the WDC decision to remove conservation lot provisions.
- **Federated Farmers:** Oppose: The applicant is seeking to remove all provisions for Significant Natural Areas except when verified by experts from field visits.

The Chairman thanked staff for their efforts on Healthy Rivers.

It was moved;

**that the Chief Executive's bimonthly report and Financial Statements be accepted.**

**Barker/Sherrard – CARRIED**

## 7. OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2022/23:

Mr Wilson introduced the Operational Work Plan (OWP) and budget for 2022/23 advising that the Plan was used as the template for the Annual Report and thus the Auditor spent considerable effort auditing both the financials and the objectives/results. Mr Wilson advised that if additional projects were added then it was equally important to remove projects considered redundant.

Councillor Barnes advised that he often saw anglers fishing illegally in the Auckland lakes. Mr Wilson replied that they were probably fishing for koi, and that rangers had reported a high compliance rate for fishing licences in the Auckland area.

Several Councillors recommended that there should be more visible presence by Fish & Game in the field. Mr Wilson agreed but that there were issues with the training of new honorary rangers due to Covid and the extensive Health & Safety requirements, and consequently there hadn't been training courses for some time in the North Island.

Councillors raised their concerns that costs were rising rapidly; for example, we could expect to see large increases in maize, roundup and fuel over the next year.

The Chairman considered that there should be greater emphasis on access in the OWP.

It was moved;

**that OWP includes an objective that we secure one new permanent access point per year.**

**Barker/de Preez – CARRIED**

The Chairman also recommended that the OWP includes more emphasis on increasing duck numbers. Mr Wilson cautioned that such an objective alone could have unforeseen consequences, but that it was already a broad theme throughout the plan.

It was moved;

**that project 1.2.5 be amended to include the word “encouraged”.**

**Barker/Ralph – CARRIED**

Councillor Barnes questioned whether it was worthwhile continuing with “Both Barrels” and “Reel Life”. He suggested that efforts should concentrate on other forms of social media. Mr Wilson replied that these were national initiatives, part of the national publicity programme. He agreed to ask NZ Council for the readership data for both. Councillors agreed that more emphasis on social media was desirable.

Councillor Barnes asked whether Dr Daniel still intended to stock Quarry Lake twice a year and whether it was worth the expense given that he had rarely seen anglers fishing these waters. Mr Wilson replied that angler usage was currently being assessed as part of the National Angler Survey, but he understood that the fishery was successful.

It was moved;

**that the following funding increases be applied for:**

Salaries (CPI only)	\$34,778
Fish releases	\$9,000
Council land	\$10,500
Office equipment	\$1,000
General equipment	\$1,000
Vehicle fuel	\$5,000
Insurance	\$1,000

**Barker/Ralph – CARRIED**

#### **8. STRUCTURAL REVIEW UPDATE:**

The Chairman expressed his concerns over the Regional Structural Review and recommended that Council commissions an independent review.

Councillor Ralph emphasised that a national conference was required so that governors could discuss the issues and move forward.

Councillor Barnes considered the Structural Review just one step in a particular journey and that Council should step up and make it work nationally. He emphasised that licence holders didn't care what region they fished in.

Councillor du Preez opposed any change to the regional boundaries for Auckland/Waikato, as we could manage the upper Whanganui better than anyone else.

The Chairman reminded Councillors that they had only three weeks to consider the new recommendations. He believed a much longer period to consider the report was required and more information on the potential options and impacts.

It was moved;

**that Council allocated \$15,000 for an external consultant to peer review the report on the Regional Structural Review.**

**Dickey/Sherrard – CARRIED**

The Chairman agreed to talk to the other Chairs about joint funding.

Councillor Sherrard strongly opposed the changes recommended in the Report due to the loss of local representation and servicing to licence holders. Councillor du Preez agreed and emphasized that a sense of belonging was important. Councillor Barker also agreed that local representation was important.

## **9. PRESSURE SENSITIVE FISHERIES:**

The NZ Council report on Pressure Sensitive Fisheries was discussed. The Chairman observed that there were no fisheries in the Auckland/Waikato region that met the definition of a pressure sensitive fisheries; however, he suggested that the scope of 'controlled access fishery' could be expended to allow for controlled management of a range of waters for objectives other than maximizing fishing satisfaction. An example would be controlling access across private land to reduce the inconvenience to a landowner that could occur with unfettered public access.

Councillor Barnes reminded councilors that he had already submitted written comments on the report.

It was moved;

**that the written comments by Councillor Barnes on the Pressure Sensitive Fisheries report be supported by Council.**

**Sherrard/Barnes – CARRIED**

## **10. ACCESS TO TROUT RIVERS:**

It was agreed that this issue had already been extensively discussed under previous agenda items.

It was moved;

**that in proposed district plan proceedings, and where possible elsewhere, Council advocates for the right of landowners to receive an additional title for placing covenants across private land to allow public access to rivers, lakes and wetlands.**

**du Preez/Sherrard – CARRIED**

## **11. OSH UPDATES:**

It was moved;

**that the Osh report to be accepted.**

**Shaw/Dickey – CARRIED**

## **12. GENERAL BUSINESS:**

The letter from John Sumich, Habitat Te Henga Project co-ordinator, was tabled. He was requesting whether Council could assist with the project by funding predator traps.

Councillor Barker questioned why Council continues ownership of this wetland given that it doesn't have any public access and is too far from any major hunting area to contribute large number of ducks. Councillor Ralph disagreed noting that the extensive wetlands on the north Manukau Heads produced large numbers of Grey Ducks that dispersed widely. Mr Wilson emphasised that there were significant advantages for Council in owning part of the most important wetland in the Auckland City region.



General discussion followed over predator traps and how such activities should be encouraged by landowners and licence holders.

It was moved;

**that Council provide funding to the Habitat Te Henga project for two AT220 traps.**

**Dickey/Shaw – CARRIED**

Correspondence was tabled from Troy Downs, Piggott Wetland President, and Grant Mackey, President Franklin Acclimatisation Society regarding tenure of ponds 1 and 5 in the Piggott Wetland.

The ponds were balloted out every 3 years by the Society, but Troy Downs considered that the ponds were in a “pretty disgusting state” as the hunters who had been successful in the ballot did not put any effort into maintaining their ponds in the final year of tenure. Mr Downs recommended that the ponds are reballoted and had ongoing tenure.

Grant Mackay agreed that pond 1 is overgrown but considered that there was nothing wrong with pond 5. He stated that the ponds were up for ballot again for 2023 season. He agreed for the need to make changes to tenure and enforce its guidelines, and they were considering that would be a bond of say \$1500-2000. Then if there is a breach of tenure there is money to pay a contractor to put things right. At moment all that is needed is spraying and they can ensure that this is done. In terms of attending working bees, they would be happy to replace the ballot holders if they did not attend 2 block working bees in a row without a valid reason.

Councillors agreed to support Mr Mackay’s recommendations and expected the work on pond 1 to be carried out soon.

It was moved;

**that the issue with the Piggott Wetland is tabled for the June meeting.**

**Sherrard/Shaw – CARRIED**

Councillor Dickey suggested that there were similar issues with all Council’s wetlands.

It was moved;

**that the Chairman of each wetland association be asked whether they had issues/problems arising from tenure and pondholders not maintaining and/or marking up ponds.**

**Sherrard/Shaw – CARRIED**

Mr Wilson noted that John Dyer regularly audited Council’s wetlands. Mr Dyer was currently carrying out an audit of the lower Waikato Islands. He was also investigating unauthorised earthworks in the Aka Aka wetland.

Councillor Ralph thanked John Dyer and David Klee for their assistance with the recent issues he had arising from Harrier Hawks predated on domestic waterfowl.

Councillor Ralph expressed his concern that the current Regional Structural Review process could result in the sale of Council's properties and thus licence holders losing access. He suggested that some form of covenant should be imposed on the titles

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3:13pm.

UNCONFIRMED

## Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

### June 2022

**Staff leave:** With both RMA staff members on maternity leave, I've taken over this role in regard to our submissions on Healthy Rivers and the Waikato District Plan. I've also asked Anna Sintenie, our former RMA officer, if she is available for temporary employment. Anna has started to work on the draft Waitomo District Plan, but she is currently only available for 4-5 hours a week.

Covid has also had an impact both on staff and family members, especially during the period from mid-April to mid-May. A huge thanks to Roslyn who monitored and answered her emails while at home with Covid, an especially busy time due to the number of requests for access permits to F&G land.

### **OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT**

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#### **Project 1112: Banding/Shoveler Counts**

**Banding:** Hunters have occasionally commented that they never hear back about some bands, which we struggled to understand given that they received recovery information from the other bands reported at the same time. David and Roslyn investigated this issue and found that all the bands were from captive reared birds that were reported online. They discovered that DOC's protocols meant that the recovery information was only being sent to the person banding the birds, which is fine for wild birds, but in the case of captive reared birds the bander is often the person breeding and selling them. Therefore, recovery information was being sent to the breeder of the birds but wasn't being passed on to hunters. We have ensured that all recovery information now goes to the person responsible for the banding project in the region where captive reared birds are released.

Subsequently Roslyn was sent the missing recoveries which she entered into the database and has sent a band report to each hunter. In total there were 378 entries that needed to be done covering the years shown below.

2016 – 23

2017 – 41

2018 – 123

2019 – 65

2020 – 84

2021 - 42

There has been feedback from hunters on Facebook that they appreciated this been done. Roslyn was also given the data that DOC had from the Auckland/Waikato region for the first captures. This was compared to what was listed in the database and any missing entries were sent to DOC for them to update.

**Duck Band Details – Website:** Roslyn has discussed with DOC the information that is entered when hunters report a band return on the website. Subsequently, Roslyn has made the following changes:

1. Your game licence number can now be entered.
2. Region that the bird was shot – you can now select a region from a pull-down list.
3. You can now add more than one band number for the same date/location.
4. Date that the bird was shot – you can now pull down a calendar.
5. Species/sex field was removed as this is already shown in the database.

This information is downloaded into a spreadsheet from the website, and Roslyn sends this to DOC to be processed. This saves a lot of time for them, as before they had to copy and paste each field into a spreadsheet.

**Banding Workshop:** There is a banding workshop scheduled to be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> June at Rotorua for all banding regions. David and Roslyn will be attending. Items to be discussed are:

- Who monitors what species and how is this done?
- How the banding program runs in each region.
- Database management – entries/storage/reporting/hunters returns.
- Data analysing and how it is reported.
- Falcon database.
- Regional needs from National office.

### **Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish**

**Arapuni fish weigh in:** Councillor Grant Annan saved the day, yet again, by taking over the *Arapuni fish weigh in*, when Adam Daniel fell ill with covid just hours before the event. The fish weigh in was a special event to collect data on the sterile trout stocking program in the absence of the annual Te Awamutu Fish & Game Association Arapuni fishing contest that was cancelled due to covid-19 restrictions. The special data collection project was supported by donated prizes collected by the Te Awamutu Fish & Game Association and Fish & Game. The random prize draw was very successful and a report on the sterile trout project will be produced in July.

### **Project 1122: Harvest Assessment: Game**

**Game harvest surveys:** The harvest survey involves calling a random selection of hunters after the Opening Weekend and then every 2<sup>nd</sup> week. The first round of harvest surveys was completed, a quick look at the data revealed that a limit was achieved 10% of the time across both days of the opening weekend. This reaffirms that limits, unless very restrictive, are a blunt tool for controlling harvest as they are generally not achieved except by a small minority of hunters. We are asking hunters their opinion on the reduction from 10 to 8 birds in the current round of surveys to gauge whether they are in favour, neutral or opposed to the change.

Generally anecdotal evidence suggests results for the first week of hunting were highly variable. Those with good water near a food source (predominantly cut maize or maize silage) appear to have done well despite the conditions. Whilst those surrounded by dry

swamps and wetlands don't have many birds in their hunting area. A common comment so far is that there appear to be more ducks around this year.

### **Project 1161 Trout Releases**

Adam made the first of two planned trout releases into Quarry Lake prior to the school holidays. The kids fish release event was canceled due to covid restrictions.

### **Project 1181: Control**

**Waikato Botulism Outbreaks:** We are generally very pleased with how most territorial authorities are managing their Waste Water Treatment Plants in the Waikato Region. Over the past decade David has managed to facilitate the training and deployment of specialised contractors who are tasked solely with managing avifauna on these ponds. By conducting early intervention including pre-moult dispersals we have reduced the impact of outbreaks significantly. Ponds which had deaths totalling into the thousands are now killing a few hundred or less birds. Moreover, we have shown plant operators that by implementing preventative actions the outcomes are not only more environmentally and socially acceptable it is also cheaper in the long run.

**Auckland Botulism Outbreaks:** A zoom meeting was held between F&G, Watercare, DoC, BirdCare Aotearoa and others to look at what could be done about botulism on wastewater treatment ponds and other locations in the Auckland Region. Options such as hazing, bird scaring and removing cadavers discussed. There is a lot more commitment from Watercare at all their sites than formerly, this being confirmed by regular visits to these northern sites by Mr Dyer.

Botulism was an issue this year at a site in Westward Ho Road, Glen Eden and the old quarry lake at Stonefields, Mt Wellington. F&G assisting with both sites.

Unusually large numbers of black swan counted on Lake Omapere, near Kaikohe in Northland, up to 14,000, but complicated by botulism there too. This lake and the numbers we count on the Kaipara Harbour seem to be linked according to Northland F&G staff who do this count for us. This lake was lowered 2m in the past, complicating its' management, rather like Lake Waikare.

**Auckland Airport:** Although Canada geese are no longer a gamebird species, we still get asked to assist their control, for instance, around Auckland Airport. A recent Zoom conference dealt with numbers of these birds crossing the runway and presenting a danger to aircraft.

An Australian ornithological expert is currently in NZ looking at how Auckland Airport can deal with geese and swans. F&G will assist with catching black swan to attach radio transmitters to better understand their movements to and from the Manukau Harbour.

**Lake Waikare predator traps:** A number of traps were secured for use around Lake Waikare. Several people have expressed an interest in checking these traps. Unfortunately, our keenest trapper who lived beside the Whangamarino Wetland has since died.

## **OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT**

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### **Project 1211 RMA**

**Advice to Nelson/Marlborough F&G:** The Nelson unitary Council (regional and district council combined) is strongly pushing for all maimai in the Nelson Region to be temporary structures unless consented on both public and private waters. We've advised the Nelson-Marlborough F&G Council on what we have achieved in the Waikato, where maimai are allowed as a permitted activity. The Nelson situation is a good example of the hassles that can arise if F&G doesn't consistently advocate for hunting and maimai in the RMA planning process.

**Healthy Rivers (Plan Change 1):** We are preparing for two judicial workshops scheduled for June, with substantial assistance from our consultants (Sarah Ongley and Helen Marr). The workshops will be on:

- Alternatives to Overseer.
- Point source discharges.

On our behalf, Sarah has lodged preliminary comments on a paper prepared by the WRC and Federated Farmers on alternatives to Overseer.

**Waikato District Plan:** In general, the amount of bureaucracy involved in these Environment Court proceedings is considerable and time consuming. Copies of each of our appeals had to be sent to all parties, while requests from other parties and the judge have to be dealt with.

**Mangatutu Stream:** After a five year wait Adam Daniel was contacted by DOC staff to discuss grazing on the upper Mangatutu. Adam escorted a DOC staff member the following day to the upper Mangatutu to inspect illegally grazed conservation land and the disputed lease of conservation land on the upper river. After the visit and inspection, the DOC staff agreed that the lease is out of scope for the reserve and have requested that the DOC permissions team cancel the lease. Although the acknowledgement by DOC that their dairy lease is impacting the Mangatutu River is exceptionally good news and indicates a major shift in the performance of DOC staff it also negates the need to conduct the periphyton survey this spring/summer.

**Diazinon:** The application for extensions to the phase out date for Diazinon to 2038 from the Vegetable Research and Innovation Board was denied by the EPA, and use of this insecticide will be phased out by 2028. A submission by the NZF&GC gets multiple mentions throughout EPA report, indicating the influence that the information relating to mass waterfowl deaths from Diazinon poisoning made within their overall assessment.

**Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review;** Consultants are waiting for new LIDAR data to help build a better hydrological model for the wetland. In the interim, cursory scoping assessments are being conducted to look at the preferred structural option for water control in the catchment.

**Max Birt and Lumbercorp discharge consents:** David attended the latest meeting. Further upgrades have been made to stormwater ponds and updated conditions include more stringent thresholds which we are largely satisfied with. After nearly a decade in the making the final consent conditions are taking shape. There are still some issues with boron levels in some of the test bores and further work is being conducted to determine the source of those.

**Cambridge WWTP:** David attended the latest virtual meeting. Good progress is being made towards upgrading the plant which will lead to significant improvements in nutrient and sediment discharges. As councillors will recall, David negotiated that \$50,000 be set aside per annum for mitigation works that will lead to water quality improvements in the upstream catchment of the Waikato River. David and Adam in concert with RiverCare are looking to establish a project in the Pokaiwhenua catchment which should tick all the boxes for this fund.

### **Project 1221: Council Land**

**Stone Jug property:** Stone Jug Road fencing was completed, and Adam has tested the fence. The existing batter was not sufficient to run the electric fence and will be upgraded in May.

**Murray Young Wetland:** David met with contractors on site to do a walkover and ensure weed control is being conducted to the required standard.

**Te Aroha Wetland:** David met with members of the Te Aroha F&G Club on site to discuss how this wetland can best be managed moving forward. We own approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the wetland with the Matamata Piako District Council owning the remainder. The site historically provides an important refuge area for birds during the hunting season but is almost completely dry for the first time in living memory. The site experienced a fish kill this year and some birds died from botulism at the site, although it is unclear if the outbreak occurred on the wetland itself or was linked to the outbreak on the nearby WWTP.

David is heading out with surveyors to establish a bathymetric profile of the wetland and then looking at getting the hydrology modelled to determine the types of flows required to maintain water levels. The wetland hasn't been at capacity for 3 years due to reduced groundwater tables and a lack of surface water recharge from the adjacent Waihou River. Once we have established the flows required to maintain wetland water levels we will look at the feasibility of obtaining a surface water take consent and pump to recharge the wetland. We have also worked on getting co-funding and in kind support from MPDC and WRC to conduct the restoration project and ongoing management of the wetland. It is a high value and high use site which currently gets looked after largely by volunteers from the Te Aroha F&G association with minimal input from other organisations.



A not so wet Te Aroha Wetland.

**North Shepherd Wetland:** The Island Block Road gate was rammed and seriously damaged. The gate was repaired, strengthened and then re-chained and padlocked again.

**Central Shepherd Wetland:** Another fire reported next to our Central Shepherd Wetland and again involving KiwiRail grinding tracks in tinder dry conditions. This time the wind was blowing away from us. The Fire Service have, at our instigation, questioned the timing of such track grinding with KiwiRail at a national level.

**Waikato Delta Islands:** Mr Dyer has been auditing the structures on Council's properties in the Waikato Delta. Because the old survey titles and the land don't always match, it's a case of record everything and then, using the WAMS website, find out what is inside our titles and what is out. Tides and repeated boat motor issues have slowed this work, (no throttle, no reverse, damaged prop and so on). Hopefully all fixed now.



## **Project 1231: Other Land**

**Lake Whangape Weir:** The Whangape weir was repaired by the WRC, the weir crest is set to 5 m (Moturiki) with the fish pass located at the eastern side of the weir. The fish passage is 5 m wide and its highest point is 0.09 m below the weir crest level (4.91 m Moturiki). The fish pass has staging pools on its gradient to allow fish to rest as they make their way up.



**F&G Wetland Consent Application:** David has been out with our consultants and aurally mapped most of the required area for the habitat assessment study, with just half of the AkaAka wetland left to do. This area needs to be done from the boat as the flight distances are too far to feasibly do them from accessible locations on the ground. The drone had a software issue which required it to be sent away, so we have had to delay this final survey. At any rate, it seems prudent to wait until the end of the dabbling duck season as we would hate for someone to have an identification issue whilst shooting in the wetland.

**Elbow Boat Ramp:** The boat ramp at the Elbow Reserve on the Waikato River is a very busy one for gamebird hunters in May. It was supposed to be upgraded last whitebait season. However, Covid and the presence of a self-sown Pohutukawa tree complicated and delayed this. Mr Dyer liaised with the District Council to ask contractors Downers if they could put some of the metal they had on-hand onto the sandy ground, which hunters were using as a temporary ramp. The authority eventually came shortly before opening and potential problems averted.

**Wetland Projects:** David completed the earthworks and some fencing components on 4 projects. The following photos show before and after drone pics of one of the sites. This is a large 8.6ha project being co-funded by the landowner, WCEET and the GBHT. The digger in the centre of the first picture is 14 tonnes to give an indication of scale.



### **Project 5235: Trees**

All going to plan, seeds of water hickory, willow oak and water tupelo will be collected and distributed this year. These are all very water tolerant species whose seeds ducks like to eat, but the parent trees are also very rare in NZ and so this seed is otherwise very hard to obtain.

## **OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION**

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### **Project 1311: Access negotiation**

Adam has continued talks with Whangapeki Trust (upper Whanganui River) trustees and finished the draft plan for the access signs on the upper Waipa. Adam has also received approval from walking access to open access at Toa Bridge and will discuss the legal access with the landowner in May.

### **Project 1331: F&G Newspapers**

Preseason April Both Barrels drafted to remind people of what is around the corner. A May post-opening Both Barrels drafted to inform hunters of a common question; “how did opening go for other hunters?”

### **Project 1341: Other publications**

Adam continues to produce the reel life blog.

Article on legal status of waterfowl accepted by the Ducks Unlimited “Flight” editor. Hamilton Museum were very helpful with historic photos of harvested brown teal which 100 years ago were both common and quite legal in hunter’s bags.

## **OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC INTERFACE**

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**5441 Displays / promotions:** F&G staff spoke at the Franklin Acclimatisation Society and Whangamarino Wetland Association AGMs. Duck Nights were cancelled due to “red” Covid setting that restricted indoor gatherings.

## **OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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### **Project 1511 Ranging**

**Maimai disputes:** Appeared to be more than usual, and they took considerable staff time to arbitrate. Most of the disputes appear to be due to hunters failing to tag before pegging day.

**Feeding out:** Food has been found cast at a number of sites. The owners of these ponds were contacted and feeding stopped. Follow ups were done and full compliance noted.

Reports of illegal shooting in Kopuku Wetland a week before Opening Weekend were received. Descriptions were vague but eventually F&G staff found a new type of gas-banger some distance off, one that has a timer that turns itself on/off.

**Game Ranging:** In the central part of the region, last minute positive Covid results meant that ranging plans had to be drastically changed and instead of targeting specific sites where high levels of noncompliance were anticipated, the remaining rangers focused on public sites such as boat ramps. Unsurprisingly, high levels of compliance were encountered with only a couple of FTPs issued that subsequently checked out. Hunting was mixed, with some impressive bags by those who had decent water despite the clear and calm conditions.

A recurring issue on the Waikato River is people shooting ducks while under power. 12 boat ramp sites were checked on the lower river including some not so obvious ones tucked away on private land. Vehicles and boat trailer registrations were photographed and a ranger's business card left under each vehicles' windscreen wiper. Many of those owners later contacted the ranger to find out what it was about and were briefed on the risks to the sport from such behaviour. They now have our number if they spot offences later in the year when water levels are higher, (when shallow sand bars are less of an issue for rapid travel). Ranging was also done by boat on the Waikato Delta at various locations. The volume of shooting and the bags resulting from it seemed well up on several previous years, though some still managed to tell hard luck stories about pockets of fog, having dry ponds and so on.

**Complaints:** Less complaints than usual on Opening Weekend, usually by new property owners. However, one area of concern is the Waikato River between Cambridge and Hamilton. Downstream from Cambridge a new cycle track follows the river for some 7km on the true-right bank, at times less than 20m from the river. Further downstream the reach between the Narrows and Hamilton is becoming increasingly developed. This area is zoned for intensive residential development, including a cycleway along the river once the new bridge is completed at the end of Wairere Drive. David and I spent a morning on the river to get some appreciation of the potential issues. We'll do more investigations after the season, and then report back to Council with recommendations as part of the 3-yearly review of the game regulations.

## **OUTPUT 8: PLANNING/REPORTING**

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### **Project 1841 National Liaison**

David was asked to contribute to the Wildlife Act Review by National Office Staff. There are significant risks but also some opportunities for Fish and Game to consider. It should be noted that this will be a 'first principles'-based review meaning it will be an entirely new iteration rather than a rejig of the existing Act. Some big picture items that we need to consider is the potential for co-management of native species, possible conflict between native and introduced species and the potential privatisation of hunting and fishing rights.

Mr Dyer has also provided a list and provided supporting evidence for those parts of the Act he thinks should be kept and those that should be changed.

**B. Wilson,  
Chief Executive**